

**Priority Handling**OCA FILE *HPSCI* **Congressional Record Action***CAH Record*

SUBJECT:

HPSCI Staff Query re LA Times Article Alleging Contra Air Fleet

STAT

*File: HPSCI*

FROM:

EPS

EXTENSION

DATE SENT

REQUEST NUMBER

29 July 1200

DD/O86-0023/1165

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and signature)

DATE

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after comment.)

1.

LA,

2.

C,

3.

*DC/LA*

4.

C/LA

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C/EPS ☐ 2D45, Tube EU-3*8**8*

6.

AC/EPS

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SA/ODDO

*COUNSEL DDG 11 AUG 1986 8-11-86*

8.

ADDO

9.

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11.

OCA/House

SUSPENSE DATE:

5 August (to OCA)

12.

RETURN TO:

FORM 10-84 4283

**Priority Handling****Congressional Action**

~~SECRET~~

30 July 1986

BACKGROUND: OCA received the following question from HPSCI staffer Dick Giza on 29 July with request for response by 5 August.

QUESTION: What is the validity of information presented in the attached Doyle McManus (Los Angeles Times Service) article, "Three Planes Readied to Join Contra Fleet"?

ANSWER: The Central Intelligence Agency has no information to substantiate the allegations that three airplanes will be turned over to the Unified Nicaraguan Organization/Nicaraguan Democratic Force contained in the article "Three Planes Readied to Join Contra Fleet."

SECRET

OCA 86-2567  
29 July 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: EPS

STAT

VIA: DD/House Affairs, OCA

FROM:   
House Affairs, OCA

STAT

SUBJECT: Miami Herald News Article

1. OCA has received a call from Dick Giza, HPSCI staff, regarding the validity of the attached article. Please respond by 5 August.

STAT



Attachment:  
As stated

ADMINISTRATIVE - INTERNAL USE ONLY

THREE PLANES READIED  
TO JOIN\*CONTRA\*FLEET\*

Inside a battered steel hangar on an inconspicuous little airfield in Southern California, three small airplanes are being fitted out to become part of an unpredictable but potentially volatile new factor in Central America's guerrilla wars -- the contras' air force.

Printer: IDLE 0%DDDDDDDDVUTEXT Miami onlyDDDD1200 BAUD  
Menu: F1 Print: F3 Disk: F4 Macro: F5 Break: F6  
8:34 am Tuesday July 29, 1986

RANK 1 OF 5, PAGE 2 OF 4

The Nicaraguan rebels, with help from a network of former U.S. military and intelligence officers operating in this country, are quietly assembling and equipping a\*fleet\*of small aircraft that will give the guerrillas a potentially important new capability in their war against the Sandinista regime.

The contras already have 14 aircraft at a secret air base in Honduras, rebel officials say. They look forward to acquiring the three planes that are being rebuilt in California's San Diego County -- aging, propeller-driven aircraft donated by retired U.S. Air Force officers -- and they are seeking still more.

So far, none of the 12 planes and two helicopters at the base has been equipped for combat,\*contra\*officials say. Instead, the fledgling air force is being used chiefly to transport and resupply guerrilla units all over Nicaragua -- "to fight the way the Viet Cong did in Vietnam, only with the added advantage of air supply," said a CIA veteran who is helping in the effort.

At this point, the\*contra\*air force is still badly outmatched by the Sandinista air force of at least 43 aircraft. And, according to all accounts, it has been largely ineffective, with many of its aircraft grounded for lack of maintenance and

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many of its pilots hesitant to fly missions that would expose them to fire from the Sandinistas' Soviet-made helicopter gunships.

"It's been a real hip-pocket operation," said Edwin Dearborn, a former CIA pilot who has been helping to organize the force. "There have been times when we've run out of gas."

Already, the contras may be the first guerrilla insurgency in history with its own airlift wing. But in the future, the contras say, they also will be looking for combat aircraft as a means of escalating the war against the Marxist-led Sandinistas even further.

"We want to use every weapon that will help us bring democracy to Nicaragua," said Adolfo Calero, chief of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), the largest\*contra\*army. "If we can get more airplanes, so much the better."

"We're looking for people to contribute both money and airplanes," said Dearborn, a Newport Beach, Calif., resident. Dearborn is overseeing the reconstruction of the three donated airplanes for the contras in San Diego County; he talked about them on condition that their precise location not be disclosed. The aircraft include a 1958-vintage Cessna L-19 spotter plane, a Cessna 337 utility plane and a Helio Courier short-takeoff-and-

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landing plane.

"If we had four of these, we'd be in pig heaven," he said, slapping the fuselage of the Helio Courier. "You can carry 2,000 pounds on these and land on a 400-foot runway chopped out of the jungle. If some guy wants to see his name on there (as a donor), all it'll take is \$40,000."

ADDED TERMS: aid guerrilla nicaragua airplane  
END OF DOCUMENT.

~~S E C R E T~~

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QUESTION : What is the validity of information presented in the attached Doyle McManus (Los Angeles Times Service) article, "Three Planes Readied to Join Contra Fleet" ?

ANSWER :

S E C R E T